CLAIMS:

1. (Previously presented): In a data processing system including a plurality of subject entities and at least one authority entity, an autonomic management method for self-configuring the subject entities, each subject entity belonging to at least one of a plurality of categories, wherein the method includes the steps of:

the at least one authority entity publishing a plurality of rules each one defining a target state for a category, the target state of at least one rule being a prerequisite for the target state of at least one further rule,

each subject entity retrieving the rules for the corresponding at least one category,

applying each retrieved rule to configure the subject entity according to the target state, the application of the retrieved rule failing when at least one corresponding prerequisite is not available on the subject entity, and

repeating the application of each failed rule to configure the subject entity according to the target state specified in the failed rule when all the corresponding prerequisites are available.

2. (Previously presented): The method according to claim 1, further including the step of:

detecting a deadlock condition on the subject entity when the number of the corresponding failed rules does not decrease after each step of repeating the application.

3. (Previously presented): The method according to claim 2, further including the steps of:

the subject entity retrieving further rules for the corresponding at least one category, and

resetting the number of the corresponding failed rules in response to the retrieving of the further rules.

4. (Previously presented): The method according to claim 3, further including the step of:

aborting the execution of a loop including the steps of applying the retrieved rules and repeating the application of the failed rules in response to the retrieving of the further

rules.

5. (Currently Amended): The method according to [[any]] claim [[from]] 1, further including the steps of:

the subject entity verifying the compliance to each retrieved rule in response to the successful application of all the retrieved rules, and

detecting a loop condition when the subject entity is not compliant to at least one retrieved rule.

6-8. (Canceled)

9. (Previously presented): In a data processing system including a plurality of subject entities and at least one authority entity, an autonomic management system for self-configuring the subject entities, each subject entity belonging to at least one of a plurality of categories, wherein the at least one authority entity includes means for publishing a plurality of rules each one defining a target state for a category, the target state of at least one rule being a prerequisite for the target state of at least one further rule, and wherein each subject entity includes means for retrieving the rules for the corresponding at least one category, means for applying each retrieved rule to configure the subject entity according to the target state, the application of the retrieved rule failing when at least one corresponding prerequisite is not available on the subject entity, and means for repeating the application of each failed rule to configure the subject entity according to the target state specified in the failed rule when all the corresponding prerequisites are available.

10. (Canceled)

11. (New): The method according to claim 1, wherein each subject entity is a computer that directly controls a resource.

12. (New): The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one further rule does not include any information about the target states of the at least one rule that are a prerequisite for the target state of at least one further rule.

13. (New): The data processing system according to claim 9, wherein each subject entity includes means for detecting a deadlock condition on the subject entity when the number of the corresponding failed rules does not decrease after each step of repeating the application.

14. (New): The data processing system according to claim 13, wherein each subject entity includes means for retrieving further rules for the corresponding at least one category and means for resetting the number of the corresponding failed rules in response to the retrieving of the further rules.

15. (New): The data processing system according to claim 14, wherein each subject entity includes means for aborting the execution of a loop including the steps of applying the retrieved rules and repeating the application of the failed rules in response to the retrieving of the further rules.

16. (New): The data processing system according to claim 9, wherein each subject entity includes means for verifying the compliance to each retrieved rule in response to the successful application of all the retrieved rules and means for detecting a loop condition when the subject entity is not compliant to at least one retrieved rule.

17. (New): The data processing system according to claim 9, wherein each subject entity is a computer that directly controls a resource.

18. (New): The data processing system of claim 9, wherein the at least one further rule does not include any information about the target states of the at least one rule that are a prerequisite for the target state of at least one further rule.

19. (New): A computer program product comprising a computer useable medium having a computer readable program, wherein the computer readable program, when executed on a subject entity computing device, causes the subject entity computing device to:

receive a plurality of rules published by at least one authority entity, each rule defining a target state for a category, the target state of at least one rule being a prerequisite for the target state of at least one further rule,

apply each rule to configure the subject entity computing device according to the target state, the application of the rule failing when at least one corresponding prerequisite is not available on the subject entity computing device, and

repeat the application of each failed rule to configure the subject entity computing device according to the target state specified in the failed rule when all the corresponding prerequisites are available.

20. (New): The computer program product according to claim 19, wherein the computer readable program further causes the subject entity computing device to:

detect a deadlock condition on the subject entity when the number of the corresponding failed rules does not decrease after each step of repeating the application.

21. (New): The computer program product according to claim 20, wherein the computer readable program further causes the subject entity computing device to:

receive further rules, and

reset the number of the corresponding failed rules in response to the retrieving of the further rules.

22. (New): The computer program product according to claim 21, wherein the computer readable program further causes the subject entity computing device to:

abort the execution of a loop including the steps of applying the retrieved rules and repeating the application of the failed rules in response to the retrieving of the further rules.

23. (New): The computer program product according to claim 19, wherein the computer readable program further causes the subject entity computing device to:

verify the compliance to each retrieved rule in response to the successful application of all the retrieved rules, and

detect a loop condition when the subject entity is not compliant to at least one retrieved rule.

24. (New): The computer program product of claim 19, wherein the at least one further rule does not include any information about the target states of the at least one rule that are a prerequisite for the target state of at least one further rule.